

## **KCIA Keeping Up With Aviation Needs for Tomorrow: Hard Works Pays Off in 2002 for Airfield Safety & Operations**

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Reflecting over the past year, King County International Airport (KCIA) has made significant advancements in enhancing safety and improving airfield operations. This was apparent after the completion of the annual Part 139 airport certification inspection this past September.

For those involved in airport operations, preparing for the annual “cert inspection” can be a stressful time much like a pilot preparing for a check-ride. The inspection is conducted by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in which the airport is critically examined for compliance with Part 139 and other regulations imposed by the FAA such as Advisory Circulars. An airport does not receive a score or a grade, but the inspector does use a checklist and his or her associated written remarks send a direct message to the airport as to how it is performing.

If you happen to be unfamiliar with Part 139, it is a Federal Aviation Regulation (FAR) defining the rules an airport must follow in order to receive or maintain an airport operating certificate. To obtain a certificate, an airport must agree to comply with specific operational and safety standards and to provide for such things as firefighting and rescue equipment. The only airports required to comply with Part 139 are those serving scheduled and unscheduled air carrier aircraft with more than 30 seats or those specifically designated by the FAA to be a Part 139 airport. Although inspections are officially held once a year, the FAA can perform unannounced inspections at any time.

During the inspection, if an airport is in violation of a rule or regulation, the FAA can impose some kind of administrative action such as a date to have the finding corrected. Additionally, the FAA can impose a financial penalty for each day the airport is not in compliance. In extreme cases, the FAA can revoke the airport’s certificate, which means closure of the airport in some cases.

On September 30, 2002, KCIA began its two-day inspection with a briefing conducted by the FAA Inspector with key airport personnel from management, engineering, maintenance, aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF) and safety. Shortly thereafter, everyone piled into a van to begin the airfield inspection tour. As we drove down the runways and taxiways, the FAA Inspector was looking for compliant surface markings and proper signage as well as observing the quality of the pavement and the condition of the safety areas. Furthermore, ground vehicle and aircraft operations were observed for safe operating practices along with checking for the presence of wildlife that might jeopardize the safety of flight. In addition to the daytime inspection, a night inspection was conducted evaluating the runway/taxiway lighting systems, signage lighting, pavement marking visibility, airport beacon, wind cones and obstruction lighting for compliance with Part 139.

After the airfield tour, the FAA Inspector conducted a time-response drill in which KCIA ARFF had the opportunity to showcase their skills by responding to a predetermined location on the airfield in less than 3 minutes. As usual, KCIA ARFF did an impressive job! ARFF personnel training records, documentation of basic emergency training and the conditions of firefighting and protective equipment were also inspected per requirement of Part 139.

Day Two of the inspection consisted of an examination of the fueling facilities including fueling trucks and associated fuel training records. The required airport files and manuals such as the Airport Certification Manual, Notices to Airmen (NOTAMs), and daily airfield self-inspection forms were reviewed for accuracy.

At the post-inspection out briefing, the FAA Inspector discussed findings and made verbal recommendations to consider as future airfield improvements. A few weeks later, KCIA received a Letter of Correction from the Inspector noting that only a single discrepancy had been found. KCIA had a remarkable inspection. To receive only one discrepancy was a proud first for KCIA. After the inspection was completed, Michael Colmant, the Acting Airport Manager, enthusiastically said, "I'm extremely proud of our staff. They do an excellent job all year and it's great to see them receive FAA recognition."

The single discrepancy indicated that not enough glass beads were impounded into the surface markings. This was a concern KCIA had identified prior to the inspection and had already allocated funding for new painting equipment dedicated to impounding glass beads. The glass beads make the surface painted signs and markings more reflective during nighttime operations.

As mentioned, KCIA has made improvements throughout the past year to the airfield. New lighted taxiway signs were added to reduce the likelihood of a runway incursion or surface incident. Numerous surface painted markings were added or repainted including the entire dashed taxiway edge line along Taxiway Alpha. The runway holdlines and ILS holdlines were "super-sized" to fulfill the new Advisory Circular requirements, which will also reduce the likelihood of an incursion. After being closed for six weeks this fall, Runway 13L/31R has reopened with a new surface, fresh paint markings and a new runway end identifier light (REIL) system installed on both ends. Furthermore, a new badge and driver's training program has been implemented enhancing the safety and security of both airside and landside operations.

KCIA has worked very hard over the past year to make the airfield safer and more user-friendly for pilots. The airport is dedicated and committed to continuing the hard work and effort displayed in 2002; therefore, it is challenging itself to a perfect inspection in 2003. KCIA cares about the flying public and the surrounding communities. As a New Year's resolution for 2003, KCIA promises to continue the airfield improvements and to provide a safe and secure operating environment for pilots, tenants, passengers, air traffic control and airport personnel.